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**THE MIGHTY AND THE LOWLY.** By Katrina Trask. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915.

The process of clarifying thought is usually long and laborious—and the clearness of thought attained is doubtless correspondingly precious. But sometimes moral vision is cleared, as it were, in a flash. There are questions of more than personal importance for the solution of which is needed the insight of the prophet rather than the skill and patience of the teacher. A truth which subtle reasoning has missed may be revealed in startling clearness by a play, a poem, or a speech. Such a truth Mrs. Trask has discovered, and she has set it forth with characteristic simplicity, conviction, and fervor.

It is often said, if seldom fully believed, that the regeneration of society must come through the regeneration of the individual. Yet the fact that despite much Christian teaching the world still remains shockingly unregenerate has turned men's minds away from the Christian conception toward specific programs of procedure. The error consists not in supposing that Christian ethics is incompatible with social reform, but in supposing that Christianity is in itself a program or can be interpreted as a program; it consists in not seeing that the supreme principle cannot be identified with a definite program just because it is supreme. They are in error, therefore, who use the fact that the New Testament offers no specific teaching in regard to social reform as an excuse for inertia or callousness—who quote with a perversion of the true meaning such sayings as, "The poor ye have always with you," or, "To him that hath shall be given." Equally in error are those who strive constantly to convert the teachings of Jesus into a radical social theory—who depict the Founder of Christianity as a partisan of the poor. Sentiment has lent countenance to this false conception; the struggles of class with class have strengthened it. Just as each of the warring nations of Europe claims the sanction of the God of Battles, Jehovah of the Thunders, so rich and poor alike—but especially those who speak in behalf of the poor—have asserted a right to the special support of the Prince of Peace. "The proletaires claim that hitherto those who have taught the Word of Jesus have not considered the proletaires. This is true. But now the proletaires do not consider the aristocrats: they lay the emphasis upon the fact that Jesus was no respecter of persons—and mean thereby that He respected *only* the poor and was no respecter of, no sympathizer with, the rich." No one, however, can read the Gospels with open eyes without perceiving that Jesus was no respecter of persons in any sense. With him rich and poor were upon a perfect equality. This is the obvious yet unrecognized truth which Mrs. Trask sets forth with a clearness and completeness that leave no room for a doubt, and with an appeal to conscience and common sense more effective than could be the mere abstract discussion of rights. For the author

attaches to her broader and juster view all the reverence which belongs to the religious character of the Founder of Christianity and all the sweet reasonableness which belongs to him in his human aspect; and she does this without *ex parte* pleading. Parable, deed, direct teaching, even the symbolism that may be drawn from the story of Christ's birth and his death, all point to the same conclusion.

Without denying that disproportionate riches are an evil or that the workers in the social revolution have their reason and their rights, Mrs. Trask rightly protests against misinterpretation of the teachings of the Gospels, and insists not only or chiefly upon the power of religion, but rather upon the lesson of democracy which the Gospels teach.

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VIOLETTE OF PÈRE LACHAISE. By Anna Strunsky Walling. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1915.

As one begins to read Mrs. Walling's fascinating and delicately phrased epitome of a woman's life—*Violette of Père Lachaise*—one is inevitably reminded of Walter Pater's *The Child in the House*. There is in Mrs. Walling's story the same completeness of escape from the commonplace as in Pater's, and there is something of the same effect of haunting strangeness. Mrs. Walling, too, has chosen, as Pater so often did, the form of an unsubstantial narrative—a narrative personal in its interest, but tenuous in that it subordinates detail to subjective truth. Really, the resemblance goes deeper; for Mrs. Walling's theme is the same as that about which Pater invariably wrote under whatever guise—the theme of life and death.

We are alive, and we know that we must die! In view of this incomprehensible situation what should be our attitude? Philosophy and religion have given their general answers; but in the last analysis the personal answer alone strikes to the root of faith. The intimations, the instinctive choices which really determine one's philosophy, cannot be reduced to a formula without a loss of conviction; they need to be clothed with personality and with feeling. Such is the motive, doubtless, that influenced the author of *Violette*. Mrs. Walling conducts her search for the true, indestructible romance of life through a personality; and if she proves little she persuades much, for she shows us an inner life wholly natural and lovely both in its joy and its distress—a life, moreover, that is self-consistent, inwardly whole, despite the keen realization of death that is so persistent an element of it.

Violette lives with her grandfather in a house near the cemetery of Père Lachaise in Paris. Père Lachaise is her playground and her teacher. She learns from it not to fear death and to estimate life as a thing of value and meaning. The story tells, with psychological truth, of her childhood, her early introduction to "social faith," her